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YEMENI UNITY AND SAUDI SECURITY

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The 1990-91 Persian Gulf conflict has overshadowed an event that may have a greater long-term effect on the security of the Arabian Peninsula than Saddam Hussein's thwarted expansionism: the unification of North and South Yemen as the Republic of Yemen in May 1990. Before unification, there was often tension and at times conflict between the two Yemens and their non-Yemeni neighbors (Saudi Arabia for North Yemen and both Saudi Arabia and Oman for South Yemen). However, during the period when both North Yemen and South Yemen existed as independent states (1967-90), their primary foreign-policy concern was with each other. Despite their long-stated wish to unify, they fought two border wars (1972 and 1979), the South supported an insurgency against the North (1979-82), and there was chronic tension between them over several issues, including the fact that each regime frequently sheltered the other's opponents.[1]

'On relations between the Yemens before unification, see Robin Bidwell, *The Two Yemens* (Singapore: Longman/Westview, |983), pp. 219-337; Fred Halliday. *Revolution and Foreign Policy: The Case of South Yemen, 1967-1987* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1990), ch. 4; Alan George, "Yemeni Unity Remains a Dream," *The Middle East,* February 1988, pp. 9-10; and Murray J. dart, "New Thinking in a Marxist Land," *Time,* January 9, 1989, pp. 35-6.

Now that Yemen is united, tension between Yemen and Saudi Arabia has arisen over a number of issues, including their common border, oil, economic relations, Yemen's foreign policy during the Gulf crisis and Saudi involvement in Yemen's internal affairs. This study will attempt to show that this Saudi-Yemeni tension is not likely to abate, but will continue and may even increase.

What may well be a permanent state of tension between Saudi Arabia and Yemen is a serious concern for American and Western foreign-policy interests. The heavy American and Western involvement in the U.N.-sanctioned coalition to expel Iraqi forces from Kuwait demonstrated their concern for the security of Saudi Arabia and its vital oil reserves.

United Yemen is unlikely to be in a position to invade and overrun Saudi Arabia the way Saddam Hussein probably could have if American and other forces had not been present to defend the kingdom. Yemen simply does not possess enough oil wealth to allow it to build up its armed forces the way Saddam Hussein did his.

On the other hand, united Yemen's strength is not inconsiderable. It reportedly has a population of 12-14 million, making it the most populous state on the Arabian Peninsula. Saudi Arabia, by contrast, re-

portedly has a population of 10 million, of which only four million or fewer may actually be Saudis.[2] In addition, Yemen possesses on the order of four billion barrels of proven oil reserves.[3] Exploration for more is currently under way. While not giving it wealth comparable to Saudi Arabia's, these newly discovered oil reserves will allow Yemen to buy its own weaponry instead of being dependent on the willingness of others to provide arms on concessionary terms, as in the past. This oil also gives Yemen the opportunity to develop its economy without being so heavily dependent on foreign aid, including aid from Saudi Arabia, as it was in the past.

As a result of its large population, newly discovered oil and the disappearance of the previously all-consuming intra-Yemeni tension, united Yemen is now in a stronger position vis-a-vis Saudi Arabia than the two Yemens were in the past. With regard to the many disputed issues between them, Yemen may be strong enough not only to protect its own interests, but also to threaten Saudi interests and exacerbate Riyadh's security problems. Yemen's ability to do this will be enhanced if it receives substantial military and economic assistance from other states.

This study will examine 1) the likely seriousness and persistence of Saudi-Yemeni tension, 2) the relative strengths and weaknesses of Saudi Arabia and Yemen, and 3) the possibility of other states aiding Yemen in its dispute with the kingdom. The study will conclude with a discussion of what policy options the United States has with regard to Saudi-Yemeni tension. In order to understand these issues, it is first necessary to briefly describe the history of Saudi relations with the two Yemens before unification, how Yemeni unification came about, and how the 1990-91 Persian Gulf conflict served to exacerbate Saudi-Yemeni animosity.

HISTORICAL BACKGROUND

Saudi Relations with the Two Yemens

The history of Saudi relations with the two Yemens is intricate.[4] The Yemens* past relations with Saudi Arabia will only be described here insofar as they are relevant to present and future Saudi-Yemeni ties. Although Yemen had not been united under a single government in recent history, the modem division between North and South, which lasted until 1990, was the result of Turkish and British imperialism.[3] North

[2]Population statistics issued by the governments of Arabian Peninsula countries are notoriously unreliable. The population of united Yemen was cited as 12 or 13 million in May 1990. Adding to this figure the reported 750,000-1,000,000 Yemenis who fled from Saudi Arabia to Yemen in the autumn of 1990 means Yemen now has a population 13-14 million. See "Two Yemens Become One, and Celebrate," *The New York Times,* May 23, 1990; "United Republic Declared," *Middle East Economic Digest* (MEED), June I, 1990, p. 28; William Drozdiak, "U.N. Force Resolution Dangerous, Yemen Says," *The Washington Post,* November 26, 1990; and "Returnees Plight Grows," *MEED.* May 3, 1991, p. 26. With regard to the population of Saudi Arabia, *The New York Times* states, " . . . there is no reliable estimate of the Saudi population. Western diplomats here dispute the frequently cited official figure of 14 million Saudis. A senior Western envoy… said there 'were probably not more than six million native Saudis in the country and about four million expatriates, of whom half are Yemenis.' " Youssef M. Ibrahim, "Saudi Curbs on Yemeni Workers Sets Off a Migration," *The New York Times,* October 23, 1990. A Saudi diplomat once told me that he thought there may be no more than four million Saudis in the kingdom.

[3]*BP Statistical Review of World Energy,* June 1990, p. 2.

[4]For a comprehensive treatment of this subject for the period 1962-89, see F. Gregory Cause III, *Saudi-Yemeni Relations: Domestic Structures and Foreign Influence* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1990).

[3]The British and Ottoman Empires established a border between their respective spheres of influence in

Yemen gained its independence in 1918, when the Ottoman Empire collapsed at the end of World War I, while South Yemen became independent from Britain in 1967.

With the retreat of the Ottomans from the entire Arabian Peninsula in 1918, a struggle for power developed in the region. The victors in this struggle were Abd al-Aziz Al-Saud (Ibn Saud), whose power expanded from Central Arabia (Nejd) to create what is now Saudi Arabia, and Imam Yahya Hamid al-Din, who succeeded in asserting his authority throughout what became North Yemen. The two leaders' plans for territorial aggrandizement clashed over the Asir, an ethnically Yemeni region just north of what is now North Yemen. In a short but decisive war between Saudi Arabia and Yemen in 1934, the Saudis defeated the Yemenis.[6]

In the Saudi-Yemeni treaty of 1934, which was signed and ratified shortly after the war, Yemen recognized the incorporation of the Asir into Saudi Arabia. This treaty, however, had an unusual feature: its provisions were only valid for a 20-year renewable term.[7] The treaty was apparently renewed in 1954. In 1974, Saudi Arabia wanted North Yemen to agree to make the border demarcation permanent and not subject to further renewal every 20 years. The North Yemeni prime minister at the time signed an agreement to this effect, but it proved so politically unpopular within Yemen that his government was unable to ratify it.[8] The 1934 treaty, then, is due for renewal again in 1994. The 1934 treaty only defined North Yemen's northern border with Saudi Arabia. Neither North Yemen's eastern border nor South Yemen's northern border with it were ever defined.

Saudi-Yemeni relations were considerably strained as a result of the 1962 revolution, which ousted the Yemeni royal family, and the ensuing civil war between republican and royalist forces which lasted until 1970. Egypt's Nasser strongly supported the newly declared Yemen Arab Republic and sent Egyptian troops to prevent it from being overwhelmed by the royalists. The Saudi government saw these events not only as a threat to its influence in a neighboring country but as a threat to the continuation of monarchial rule in Saudi Arabia itself. Nasser made no secret of his desire to see all Arab monarchies overthrown and united in a pan-Arab "republic" under his leadership. Saudi Arabia, in response, provided substantial military assistance to the royalist forces seeking to destroy the republic.[9]

The war dragged on for many years. Unable to suppress the royalist rebels and unwilling to bear the costs of this war any further, Nasser completely withdrew his forces from Yemen shortly after Egypt's defeat in the 1967 Arab-Israeli war. In order to encourage Egypt's withdrawal, Saudi Arabia agreed to cease its support for the royalists. In 1970, Saudi Arabia helped arrange a settlement among the warring Yemenis whereby the royalists recognized the republican government and, except for the Yemeni royal family itself, were granted an amnesty.[10]

Yemen in agreements reached in 1909 and 1914. No Yemeni party participated in this process. Eric Macro, *Yemen and the Western World* (London: C. Hurst & Co., 1968), pp. 38-40.

[6] H. StJ. B. Philby, *Arabian Jubilee* (London: Robert Hale Ltd., 1952). pp. 184-187; and Manfred W. Wenner, *Modern Yemen: 1918-1966* (Baltimore: The Johns Hopkins Press, 1967), pp. 142-147.

[7] For the text of the May 1934 Saudi-Yemeni treaty and associated agreements, see *British and Foreign State Papers. 1934* (London: HMSO, 1939), pp. 670-683.

[8] Gause. pp. 105-06.

[9] On Saudi-Egyptian rivalry over North Yemen during the 1960s, see Malcolm H. Kerr, *The Arab Cold War,* 3rd ed. (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1971), pp. 107-14.

[10] Robert W. Stookey, *Yemen: The Politics of the*

Although bitter enemies during much of the 1960s, Saudi Arabia and North Yemen became increasingly cooperative after the withdrawal of Egyptian troops, the coming to power of a more conservative government in Sanaa, and the realization that they faced a common threat from the Soviet-backed Marxist regime that arose in South Yemen following Britain's withdrawal in 1967.

Saudi Arabia feared that the Marxist regime in the South would subvert and gain control over the North as well. South Yemen threatened Saudi Arabia in other ways too. South Yemen transformed the ongoing regional rebellion in Oman's Dhofar province (bordering South Yemen) into an insurgency seeking to replace British-backed monarchies with Marxist rule in Oman, the United Arab Emirates, Qatar and Bahrain. Saudi Arabia also sponsored several efforts to overthrow the Marxist regime from South Yemen or dismember the country. In addition, there were serious clashes along the undefined Saudi-South-Yemeni border. In order to protect itself, then, Saudi Arabia stopped supporting royalist forces opposing the North Yemeni government and gave Sanaa military and economic aid in order to strengthen the North relative to the South."

Yet even at the height of Saudi-North-Yemeni cooperation, which occurred during the 1970s, the way in which Riyadh aided Sanaa became a source of contention. North Yemen is a very poor country. Before the discovery of oil in 1984, the North Yemeni government could obtain very little revenue from domestic sources. This made it especially difficult for the government to gain control over the powerful tribes of northern North Yemen. Most of the North Yemeni government's annual budget was provided by Saudi Arabia. But Saudi Arabia also provided financial support directly to tribal leaders, army officers and government officials.[12] This, of course, did not help the North Yemeni government strengthen its influence over the tribes or allow it to pursue any type of policy without Saudi Arabia's somehow becoming involved in it. The North Yemeni government resented this, but since it needed economic assistance and was unable to obtain much from any other source, Sanaa was forced to put up with the situation.

While Saudi Arabia wanted North Yemen to be strong enough to defend itself against South Yemen, Riyadh did not want North Yemen (which even before unification had a larger population than Saudi Arabia) to become strong enough to threaten the kingdom.

Military assistance became an even more contentious issue between Riyadh and Sanaa. While the republicans had received significant military aid from the USSR during the civil war, Moscow was unwilling to provide much assistance during the 1970s, when North Yemen had drawn closer to Saudi Arabia and when Moscow's attention was focused on aiding Marxist South Yemen. North Yemen desperately sought military assistance from other sources to protect itself from South Yemen. But Western

Yemen Arab Republic (Boulder: Westview Press, 1978). pp. 246-49; and Gause. pp. 75-82.

"Halliday, pp. 157-64; and Gause, chs. 6-7.

"Gause, pp. 120-121. 138-40. On the role of the northern tribes in Yemeni politics, see Paul Dresch, *Tribes. Covernmeni. and History in Yemen* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1989), esp. ch. 10.

nations, including the United States, were unwilling to provide more than limited military assistance to the North." They pursued this policy in deference to Saudi wishes.

While Saudi Arabia wanted North Yemen to be strong enough to defend itself against South Yemen, Riyadh did not want North Yemen (which even before unification had a larger population than Saudi Arabia) to become strong enough to threaten the kingdom. North Yemen, of course, was too poor to be able to buy weapons on its own. The issue came to a head as a result of the 1979 inter-Yemeni border war. When the conflict erupted, the Carter administration decided to rush approximately $500 million worth of weapons to North Yemen. Because the weapons were being purchased by Saudi Arabia, the United States delivered much of the weaponry to the kingdom, which undertook to transfer it to North Yemen. However, when the border war ended a few weeks later, Saudi Arabia stopped transferring the American weapons to North Yemen."

North Yemen, though, still faced an important security threat. Although direct fighting between North Yemeni and South Yemeni armed forces had ended, the National Democratic Front (NDF—a South-Yemeni-backed North Yemeni revolutionary group) launched an insurgency against the Sanaa regime. The North Yemeni government urged both Saudi Arabia and the United States to deliver the American weapons which the kingdom had purchased for it, but without success. Desperate for military support, the North Yemeni president went to Moscow later that year and succeeded in persuading the USSR to provide him with over a half-billion-dollars' worth of Soviet weapons. It was with these Soviet weapons that the North Yemeni government was finally able to defeat the NDF insurgency by mid-1982.[15]

The Saudis, of course, were extremely upset by the renewal of Soviet involvement in North Yemen. However, they continued their economic assistance to Sanaa. Halting it would have meant allowing the USSR to become the dominant external influence in the North, thus raising the possibility of a united Marxist Yemen in the future. Through continued economic assistance, Saudi Arabia could hope to prevent the USSR from dominating the North as well as the South. The North Yemeni government was happy to receive economic aid from Riyadh and military aid from Moscow, as this allowed Sanaa to avoid becoming too dependent on either of them.[16]

South Yemen, by contrast, had become completely dependent on the Soviet Union. Saudi Arabia tried to compete with the USSR for influence by offering economic assistance, but its efforts failed. The desire of one South Yemeni president to move away from Moscow and closer to Riyadh led to his ouster and execution by the hard-line pro-Soviet faction in 1978. The suspicion that another South Yemeni president wanted to do this contributed to the outbreak of the bloody civil war that led to his ouster in 1986. Saudi-South-Yemeni relations relaxed somewhat, though, with the end of serious South Yemeni efforts to export revolution to Oman and North Yemen after the defeat of insurgent groups in those countries in 1975 and 1982 respectively.[17]

"North Yemen had not completely ended its arms relationship with the Soviet Union during the 1970s. See Mark N. Katz, *Russia and Arabia* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1986), pp. 45-46; and Gause, pp. 116-117.

[14]Katz. pp. 38-9.

"Ibid., pp. 39-44. 46-9.

"Gause, p. 139.

"Katz, pp. 91-92; and Halliday, pp. 44-53, 151-54, 164-65.

Yet another issue contributing to tension between Riyadh and Sanaa was the discovery of oil in North Yemen in 1984. Oil was found near Marib at the eastern extremity of North Yemen, a region where the Saudi-Yemeni border has not been defined. Saudi Arabia began to assert territorial claims in the area where oil was found and in other areas where oil companies were exploring.[18]

In the past, workers from North Yemen (and South Yemen to a lesser extent) have been able to find work in the oil-rich monarchies of the Gulf, but especially in Saudi Arabia. This has benefitted the Yemens tremendously, since the workers sent home remittances that supported a large number of people in these poor countries. When the price of oil was high, more Yemenis were hired in Saudi Arabia and elsewhere; when it declined, however, many were sent home. Thus, even before its own discovery of oil, North Yemen's economy was strongly tied to the vagaries of its price.

Saudi Arabia allowed Yemeni workers to enter the kingdom on easier terms than nationals from other countries (including most Arab countries). Yemeni workers in Saudi Arabia did not need to have a Saudi sponsor, and Yemenis owning businesses did not need a Saudi partner (a sponsor or a partner being required for most other foreigners).

It is estimated that 1.5—2 million Yemenis were living in Saudi Arabia (though many of these were family members accompanying workers).[19] They performed many of the jobs that Saudis themselves were unwilling to do. But there was tension in this area too. Many Yemenis complained of harsh, discriminatory treatment in Saudi Arabia. The Saudis, for their part, apparently feared that the large Yemeni population in the kingdom might somehow support opposition to the monarchy. Thus, even before 1990, there were multiple deep-seated causes for tension between Saudi Arabia and the Yemens. Yemeni unification and the Gulf conflict served to exacerbate those tensions dramatically.

Unification

Although both Yemens had frequently announced unification as their goal (especially after periods of fighting or severe tension between them), this goal did not appear likely to be achieved. One of the primary reasons for this was that neither regime was willing to allow the other to predominate in a united Yemen. Thus, unity could not be achieved on a voluntary basis. Had the. NDF insurgency succeeded, Yemen might have been united under the auspices of the Marxist regime in the South. Neither Yemen, however, was powerful enough to achieve unity through conquering the other.

Nor did the external patrons of the two Yemens support unity. Saudi Arabia feared that a united Yemen would be a radical, pro-Soviet state over which the kingdom would exercise little influence. The Soviets, for their part, apparently feared that the more populous, non-communist North would dominate a united Yemen and Moscow's position in the South would be either weakened or eliminated.

More than anything else, discussions, agreements and "progress" on unity in the past represented an effort by the two Yemens to improve their relations and prevent

"Discussions with Saudi, Yemeni, and American diplomats. See also Robert D. Burrowes, *The Yemen Arab Republic: The Politics of Development. 1962-1986* (Boulder: Westview Press/London: Croom Helm, 1987), pp. 149-50; and Mark N. Katz, "The Saudis, Again, Are the Bullies on the Block," *The Wall Street Journal.* October 9. 1989.

"Ibrahim, "Saudi Curbs on Yemeni Workers Sets Off a Migration"; and "No Longer Yesmen," *The Economist,* September 29, 1990, p. 45.

conflict—more modest but still difficult goals for them to achieve.[20] The situation changed drastically, however, as a result of changes in Soviet foreign policy under Mikhail Gorbachev. When Gorbachev first came to power, he seemed strongly committed to maintaining Soviet influence in South Yemen. Under his leadership, the Soviet Union moved quickly to back one side in the civil war that erupted between factions of the ruling Marxist party. While Soviet advisers in South Yemen were involved in the conflict, Moscow issued warnings to other governments not to interfere.[21] By the fall of 1989, however, Soviet foreign policy had obviously changed. Moscow had withdrawn its troops from Afghanistan, supported an agreement whereby Cuban troops would leave Angola, and encouraged Vietnam to pull its soldiers out of Cambodia. Most dramatically of all, Gorbachev acquiesced to the downfall of communist governments in Eastern Europe.

The leadership of South Yemen apparently realized that if Gorbachev was unwilling to preserve Marxism in Eastern Europe, he would do little to save it in South Yemen. By the beginning of 1990, Moscow had halted economic assistance, which it had been providing at the rate of $400 million per year, and drastically reduced military aid to South Yemen. Even more important, Moscow indicated that it would do nothing to oppose Yemeni unity; South Yemen was no longer of vital importance to the Soviet Union.[22] The South Yemeni leaders, wishing to avoid being swept away completely like Marxist rulers in other countries, readily agreed to becoming the junior partners in the government of a united Yemen. The northern president and strongman is now president of united Yemen. Many of the former southern leaders, though, have obtained important positions in the new government.[23]

Saudi leaders issued statements welcoming Yemeni unity. Nevertheless, relations between the kingdom and united .Yemen were tense. Sanaa issued calls for all border issues between it and Riyadh to be settled amicably, thus letting it be known that Yemen was not simply going to accept Saudi claims to territory which might contain oil.[24] In addition, certain pro-Saudi conservative religious leaders and tribal sheikhs in northern North Yemen issued statements opposing unity for fear of the spread of Marxism from the South to the North.[25] This campaign was interpreted in Sanaa as a Saudi-sponsored effort to under-

*This was how several North Yemeni officials and scholars portrayed the purpose of unity efforts to me during many discussions held at various points during the 1980s.

[20]For an excellent account of Soviet involvement in the 1986 South Yemeni civil war, see Norman Cigar, "Soviet-South Yemeni Relations: The Gorbachev Years," *Journal of South Asian and Middle Eastern Studies,* 12:4 (Summer 1989), pp. 3-38.

[22]Jean Gueyras, "Les Deux Yemens creent un etat unique," *Le Monde,* May 23,1990; *idem.*, "Le Yemen sans etoiles rouges," *Le Monde,* June 13,1990; Simon Edge, "Merger Proves an Attractive Option," *MEED,* January 19, 1990, pp. 4-5; and *idem.*, "Luring Investors to a United Yemen," *MEED,* July 6.1990, p. 4.

[13]A listing of united Yemen's presidential council and cabinet which states whether each official is from the North or the South appears in "Government of Yemen," *MEED,* June 8, 1990, p. 40.

"See, for example, the interview with Yemeni Deputy Prime Minister and Foreign Minister Abd al-Karim al-Iryani in London *Al-Tadamun,* July 16,1990 in U.S. Foreign Broadcast Information Service, *Dairy Report: Near East and South Asia (FBIS-NES),* July 18, 1990, pp. 19-20. See also Cairo *Al-Ahati,* December 13, 1989, in *FBIS-NES,* December 15, 1989, p. 20; and Sanaa Domestic Service in Arabic, January 23,1990 in *FBIS-NES,* January 24, 1990, p. 21, for statements by the then foreign minister of South Yemen and President Salih respectively.

"See, for example, Paris AFP in French, April 15, 1990 in *FBIS-NES,* April 18, 1990, p. 12; "Reports of Unrest Denied," *MEED,* May II, 1990, p. 30; and "United Republic Declared," *MEED,* June 1,1990, p. 28.

mine the unification effort and the new government.

The 1990-91 Gulf Crisis

The Iraqi invasion of Kuwait in August 1990 severely exacerbated Saudi-Yemeni relations. Although Yemen condemned the invasion, it also objected to the presence of "foreign" (i.e.. Western) armed forces in the region. In addition, Yemen, which had become a non-permanent member of the U.N. Security Council, either voted against or abstained from several resolutions directed against Iraq.[26]

Although the Yemeni government later claimed that it was "neutral" in the Gulf conflict and only sought to promote its peaceful resolution by Arab states,[27] the Saudi leadership understandably felt betrayed and threatened by Yemen's actions. By opposing the presence of foreign forces in Saudi Arabia, Sanaa was calling upon Saudi Arabia to negotiate with a hostile Iraq from a position of extreme weakness. Indeed, the Yemeni leadership was calling for Riyadh to forego foreign military support even though this would mean leaving the kingdom vulnerable to attack from Iraq's armed forces.

In response to Sanaa's actions, Saudi Arabia halted all economic assistance to Yemen and deployed troops along the Saudi-Yemeni border.[28] In addition, Saudi Arabia canceled the dispensation from being required to have a Saudi sponsor or business partner that Yemenis working in the kingdom previously enjoyed. Those Yemenis unable to find sponsors or partners in the relatively short period of time allotted for them had to leave. Since fear and hatred of Yemenis became widespread within Saudi Arabia, few found sponsors or partners. An estimated one million Yemenis had to leave Saudi Arabia and return to Yemen.[29]

This was an especially heavy blow to Yemen's economy, which was already suffering from the loss of Saudi aid. Each Yemeni working in Saudi Arabia probably supported several Yemenis back home. There were, of course, few jobs available in Yemen (which was why most left in the first place), so the returning workers would be unemployed. They and the family members they supported often faced destitution.[30]

SAUDI-YEMENI TENSION: HOW SERIOUS?

Is Saudi-Yemeni tension likely to last? Supposedly bitter, unresolvable disputes between Arab governments have frequently ended in expressions of undying

''See, for example, Sanaa Domestic Service in Arabic, August 16, 1990 in *FBIS-NES,* August 17, 1990, pp. 17-18; Sanaa Domestic Service in Arabic, August 26, 1990 in *FBIS-NES,* August 30, 1990, pp. 26-27; Geraldine Brooks, "Yemen's Leader Decries Build-Up by U.S., Casts His Lot with Iraq," *The Wall Street Journal,* August 20, 1990; William Drozdiak, "Baker Rebuffed by Yemeni Leader on U.N. Resolution," *The Washington Post,* November 23,1990; and *idem.,* "U.N. Force Resolution Dangerous, Yemen Says." A chronology listing which U.N. Security Council members voted against or abstained from the key resolutions directed against Iraq is contained in "Chronology: The Gulf Crisis—U.N. Security Council Actions," *U.S. Department of State Dispatch,* March II. 1991, p. 165.

"See, for example, the statements by Yemeni Foreign Minister al-Iryani in Eric Watkins, "The Shadow of Suspicion," *The Middle East.* March 1991, p. 25.

"Paris AFP in English, October 8, 1990 in *FBIS-NES,* October 9, 1990, p. 17; Judith Miller, "Yemenis Fear High Cost of Gulf Crisis," *The New York Times,* November 6, 1990; Watkins, "The Shadow of Suspicion"; and Sheila Carapico, "Yemen: Unification and the Gulf War," *Middle East Report,* May-June 1991, p. 26.

"Ibrahim, "Saudi Curbs on Yemeni Workers Sets Off a Migration"; and Jean Gueyras. "Yemen Admits Iraq's Wrongs but Protests U.S. 'Intransigence'," *Le Monde,* February 20,1991 in *FBIS-NES,* February 21, 1991. p. 18.

"•"Returnees Plight Grows." *MEED,* May 3, 1991, p. 26.

brotherhood and love. This has been true for Saudi-Yemeni relations in the past. Instead of fostering enmity between them, the 1934 border war ushered in a period of genuinely cooperative Saudi-Yemeni relations which lasted until the Yemeni royal family was ousted in 1962.[31] Similarly, although the Saudis supported the opponents of the republican regime in North Yemen from 1962 until 1970, Saudi-North Yemeni relations were very close for nearly a decade afterward and cooperative for another decade. Is it possible, then, that Saudi-Yemeni relations will return to "normal" now that the Gulf crisis is over?

It is possible, but, in my view, highly unlikely. To begin with, after the 1934 and 1962-1970 conflicts, relations between Riyadh and Sanaa improved partly because they faced common opponents: Britain in the earlier period and Soviet-backed South Yemen later. They face no such common opponent now and are unlikely to do so in the foreseeable future. More important, Saudi-Yemeni relations became so seriously embittered during the 1990-91 Gulf conflict that it is doubtful they will be able to return to "normal." The expulsion of Yemenis from Saudi Arabia during the war will have long-lasting consequences for relations between Sanaa and Riyadh. In addition to the extra burden that this has placed on Yemen's faltering economy, the expelled and their dependents are likely to form a large, embittered group willing to support a hostile policy toward the kingdom long into the future.

Even if Saudi Arabia sought a rapprochement with Yemen, it probably could not appease the expelled workers by allowing them to return to the kingdom. Many Yemenis lost property and businesses which had to be abandoned or sold to Saudis at low prices. The kingdom is highly unlikely to restore this property or compensate the Yemenis for it. In fact, the Saudi government is unlikely to believe it would be possible to achieve a rapprochement with Yemen' by readmitting Yemeni workers. The Saudi government and people would probably view all Yemenis as potential saboteurs, and treat them accordingly. And although the kingdom relied heavily on Yemeni workers in the past for jobs the Saudis themselves did not want to do, it faces no necessity to bring them back. There are huge labor surpluses in Egypt, Morocco, Pakistan, Bangladesh and other Muslim countries which allied with Saudi Arabia during the Gulf War and whose nationals Riyadh considers less threatening than Yemenis.

Like King Hussein of Jordan, Salih may have feared that his own political survival would be in jeopardy if he did not pursue a pro-Iraqi policy.

If the Saudi government had hoped that the expelled Yemenis would blame Sanaa's policy in the Gulf War for their plight, it was wrong. Whatever else can be said about President Salih's support for Saddam Hussein, it undoubtedly reflected Yemeni public opinion, which was strongly pro-Iraqi and anti-Saudi.[32] Like King Hussein of Jordan, Salih may have feared that his own political survival would be in jeopardy if he did not pursue a pro-Iraqi policy.

"Philby. pp. 190-93.

"Paris AFP in English, August II, 1990 in *FBIS-NES*, August 13, 1990, p. 44; "Government and People Slam Attack on Iraq," *MEED*, February 1. 1991, p. 24; Aden Domestic Service in Arabic, February 18, 1991 in *FBIS-NES*, February 21.1991, p. 19.1 visited Sanaa in May 1990 and can testify to the strongly pro-Iraqi sentiment among Yemenis that was then evident.

As has been shown here, clashing Saudi and Yemeni policies during the Gulf War, rather than interrupting a "friendly" relationship, brought to the surface long-festering animosities between the two countries, which had only grudgingly cooperated with each other before the Gulf War. The depth of their mutual animosity is revealed by the public statements of each side. It is evident from them that Saudi Arabia and Yemen each regards itself as the innocent victim of the other's obvious ingratitude for years of sacrifice and service. Saudi statements, for example, express genuine shock that after having given massive economic assistance to Yemen for decades at a level that no other state came close to providing, and after having allowed Yemenis preferential access to the kingdom, the Yemeni government volubly and enthusiastically supported an enemy of the kingdom which could have conquered it.[33] To the Saudi leadership, ending economic assistance to Sanaa as well as preferential access to the kingdom for Yemenis were obviously justified retaliatory measures.

Yemeni statements reveal an equal if not greater sense of injury. According to them, it was Yemeni workers and businessmen who "built Saudi Arabia" without adequate compensation. For Riyadh to expel the Yemenis was a demonstration of extraordinary ingratitude and maliciousness.[34] These statements also reveal a Yemeni attitude that regards Saudi possession of vast oil wealth as illegitimate. This oil, they imply, belongs to and should benefit the Arab nation as a whole. The Saudi regime, along with the other oil-rich Gulf monarchies, are viewed as being artificially kept in power by Western governments who want to keep the Arab nation weak and divided.

The extent to which Saudi and Yemeni views of each other and third parties correspond with reality is less important than the fact that they are firmly and fervently adhered to in these two countries. The Gulf conflict, however, did more than exacerbate Saudi-Yemeni relations generally. It also exacerbated three other outstanding issues in Saudi-Yemeni relations: the borders, oil and Saudi involvement in Yemeni affairs.

With regard to the border issue, two letters exchanged by the Saudi and Yemeni plenipotentiaries at the signing of the 1934 border treaty can be interpreted as allowing relatively unrestricted Yemeni entry into

"One Saudi newspaper stated, "The kingdom has never adopted a hostile position toward Yemen in the history of relations between the two countries. Why are the rulers of Yemen, then, trying to spoil the love and brotherhood that bind the two peoples, even though they know that such attempts will not advance any cause of theirs or solve any problem? All there is to it is that they are carrying out the orders of their master in.Baghdad." Ad-Dammam *Al-Yawm,* November I, 1990 in *FBIS-NES,* November 5, 1990, p. 13.

The Saudi Defense Minister, Prince Sultan, said, "The Kingdom of Saudi Arabia sees the Yemeni people as a brotherly people. Even if Ali Abdallah Salih has adopted that strange position on the invasion of Kuwait, it does not represent the opinion of the majority of the Yemeni people.

"If we feel bitter about Ali Abdallah Salih's position, it is because the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia helped to lead Ali Abdallah Salih to the presidency. This, despite the Yemeni friends' opposition. Our motive was our desire to spare Yemen the risk of falling into the whirlpool of bloody internal conflicts." London *Al-Sharq Al-Awtat,* March 26, 1991 in *FBIS-NES,* March 28, 1991. See also Riyadh SPA in Arabic, October 19, 1990 in *FBIS-NES.* October 22,1990, p. 5.

"President Salih was quoted as saying, "Thousands of Yemenis are being expelled without justification and are forced to return home on foot. They are being expelled after long years spent building the countries in which they worked. This arouses our concern and bitterness." Sanaa Domestic Service in Arabic, September 25,1990 in *FBIS-NES.* September 26,1990. p. 21. See also Sanaa Domestic Service in Arabic, September 20, 1990 in *FBIS-NES,* September 20, 1990, p. 19; and London *Al-Quth Al-Arabi,* October 26, 1990 in *FBIS-NES.* October 31, 1990, p. 30.

the kingdom." This, not surprisingly, is how the Yemeni government now interprets the treaty. In a newspaper interview, the Yemeni foreign minister noted that this treaty is renewable every 20 years. He implied that because Saudi Arabia had ended relatively unrestricted Yemeni access to the kingdom, Yemen would be justified in demanding a revision of the border in favor of Sanaa.[36]

He also reiterated Yemeni claims to other territory falling outside the purview of the 1934 treaty. As mentioned previously, there has been no demarcation for what was North Yemen's eastern border with Saudi Arabia and what was South Yemen's northern border with it. In the past, one of the means for resolving border issues on the Arabian Peninsula such as this has been to ask the tribes living in the disputed area which nation they considered themselves belonging to.[37] According to several knowledgeable sources, the Saudi government has been paying the tribes in areas disputed with Yemen to accept Saudi passports and government services. With far fewer resources, Sanaa fears it cannot win a competition in which the tribes might well declare themselves belonging to whichever nation's government can offer them the most.

This region is also the area where oil has been discovered and where the Yemeni government hopes more will be found. According to one oil industry source, the Saudi government has recently sponsored oil exploration near this region. It is also apparently trying to prevent Western oil companies from exploring for oil under Yemeni government auspices.[38]

The question of finding and exploiting oil, though, has become more important than ever for Yemen as a result of the Gulf conflict. Due to the cut-off of Saudi aid and the expulsion of Yemeni workers from the kingdom, oil offers the only means for replacing lost income and improving Yemen's standard of living. This is an issue that is so serious to Yemen that it is probably prepared to fight over it.

Finally, there is the matter of Saudi involvement in Yemen's internal affairs. As mentioned earlier, the Saudis regarded Yemeni condemnation of the presence of Western forces in the kingdom as a willingness to see the Saudi monarchy ousted and replaced. Whether this view of Yemeni intentions is accurate is less important than the fact that the Saudi government believed it to be true and has responded in turn by indicating its willingness to see the current Yemeni government ousted and replaced. Saudi and Saudi-sponsored media in third countries have run interviews with Yemeni notables denouncing Ali Abdallah Salih's "dictatorship."[39]

The publication of these statements in the Saudi press is not proof positive that

"British and Foreign State Papers. 1934, p. 683.

"London *Al-Quds Al-Arabi,* October 24, 1990 in *FBIS-NES,* October 30, 1990, p. 19.

"This process was described by Fhilby, who was one of the party sent by the Saudi king to delimit the Saudi-Yemeni border after the 1934 border war. See his *Arabian Highlands* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press. 1952), pp. 544-45.

"Saudi forces reportedly chased out a party of French geologists exploring in the Hadramawt region in early 1991.

"See, for example, Jeddah *Ukai,* September 2,1990 in *FBIS-NES,* September 14, 1990. p. 17; Riyadh TV Service in Arabic, September 20, 1990 in *FBIS-NES,* September 21,1990, p. 14; Jeddah *Al-Madinah,* October 9. 1990 in *FBIS-NES,* October 17, 1990. p. 28; London *AI-ShraqAl-Awsat,* October 26,1990 in *FBIS-NES,* October 31, 1990, p. 32; London *Al-Majallah,* February 13-19. 1991 in *FBIS-NES,* February 22. 1991. p. 34; London *Al-Majallah,* February 27-March 5, 1991 in *FBIS-NES,* March 6, 1991. pp. 23-25; London *Al-Sharq Al-Awsat,* March 6, 1991 in *FBIS-NES,* March 15, 1991. p. 16; London *Al-Sharq Al-Awsat,* March 14.1991 in *FBIS-NES,* March 20, 1991, pp. 16-17; and London *Sawt Al-Kuwayt Al-Duwali,* August 25. 1991 in *FBIS-NES,* August 30, 1991, p. 14.

Riyadh is actively seeking to overthrow the Salih government. It is highly likely, however, that Sanaa interprets these statements as reflecting just such an intention. The fact that the Saudi press has continued running them since the end of the Gulf War can only serve to heighten Yemeni apprehensions about Riyadh's intentions.

As a result of the number of issues dividing Yemen and Saudi Arabia, their severe exacerbation and expansion during the Gulf War, and the tremendous animosity that has built up between the two countries, Saudi-Yemeni tension is unlikely to be a temporary phenomenon. It will probably be a long-term feature of the region's international relations and could produce open conflict.

SAUDI ARABIA VS. YEMEN: STRENGTHS AND WEAKNESSES

Even if Saudi-Yemeni tension is likely to continue indefinitely, how important is it? If Saudi Arabia is strong and Yemen is weak, then Saudi-Yemeni tension will not threaten Saudi security and need not concern American and Western defense planners.

In many ways, Saudi Arabia is far stronger than Yemen. The Saudi economy produces a gross domestic product (GDP) on the order of $80 billion per year. United Yemen's GDP is less than 10 percent this size.[40] Although the armed forces of Saudi Arabia and Yemen are roughly comparable in terms of manpower,[41] the quality of Saudi Arabia's American- and Western-supplied weaponry is far superior to the mainly Soviet weapons possessed by Yemen. In addition, Sanaa's lack of both resources and full control over the country allows Riyadh to support Yemeni groups seeking to thwart Sanaa's efforts to establish and maintain its authority.

Nevertheless, Yemen enjoys certain strengths vis-a-vis Saudi Arabia, strengths which are likely to increase over time. As was mentioned at the beginning of this study, the unification of Yemen has brought an end to the North and South viewing each other as the primary security threat. Now that it is united, Yemen can concentrate on its differences with Saudi Arabia. In addition, the discovery of oil has given the Yemeni government an independent source of wealth that it never before possessed. This revenue allows the Yemeni government to act independently, without the deference to Saudi Arabia which was necessary when Sanaa depended on Riyadh for its annual budget. And, of course, the more oil discovered in Yemen, the stronger the Yemeni government will be. With greater oil wealth, Sanaa can afford to buy its own weapons and not depend on concessionary arms transfers from others. More wealth would also allow Sanaa greater opportunity to increase its control throughout the country by reaching over the heads of recalcitrant tribal sheikhs to offer benefits to the tribesmen.

For the Yemeni government, then, the discovery of more oil has enormous political as well as economic significance. It would not be surprising if Sanaa were prepared to fight for territory in the disputed border regions which it believes to be Yemeni. Whatever oil exists in this region would add significantly to Yemen's wealth, while it would add only marginally to Saudi Arabia's. The kingdom's primary aim in laying claim to the area is to deny it to Yemen.

In a potential conflict over this disputed territory, Yemen's armed forces would enjoy several advantages over Saudi Ara-

"International Institute for Strategic Studies, *The Military Balance, 1990-1991* (London: Brassey's/IISS, 1990), pp. 115. 121-22.

[41] Ibid.

bia's. Although the regions in question are remote, they are more readily accessible to the Yemenis than to the Saudis. Riyadh would have to maintain forces at the far edge of the sparsely populated Rub al-Khali desert. For Sanaa, on the other hand, many of these areas are close to towns and villages populated by Yemenis. In addition, Yemen's lines of communication would be shorter than Saudi Arabia's.

Finally, though it is difficult to quantify their importance, there are two other factors that would strengthen the Yemeni government in any dispute with Saudi Arabia. The first is the very strong sense of Yemeni nationalism. Even in the past, Yemeni nationalism has identified the Saudi monarchy as one of the primary and primordial enemies of Yemen. With the expulsion of Yemeni workers from the kingdom this has increased. In any territorial dispute between Sanaa and Riyadh, the Yemeni government could count on a strong surge of Yemeni nationalist sentiment to support it. Indeed, any Yemeni government that the populace did not perceive as sufficiently energetic in defending Yemeni territory from Saudi encroachments would probably find itself increasingly vulnerable internally.[41]

Second, although Yemen is not a democracy, it has begun to democratize. In 1988, President Salih allowed relatively free elections to be held for 80 percent of the seats in North Yemen's parliament.[43] Although the South Yemeni members of the transition parliament of united Yemen were not freely elected, elections throughout Yemen are planned for late 1992 or early 1993. Parliament does not seriously question the army-backed president's authority on the defense budget, but has played an increasingly active role in non-defense areas. In addition, a multiplicity of political parties has sprung up ranging from conservative Islamist at one extreme to radical leftist at the other.[44]

As a result of this progress toward democratization, the Salih government has probably become more legitimate in the eyes of most Yemenis, though this is difficult to measure. At the very least this progress toward democratization has meant that Saudi support for Salih's opponents is less of a threat to Salih. Indeed, Saudi support for these figures may only serve to discredit them and increase popular sympathy for Salih.[4]*

Just as Yemen possesses strengths as well as weaknesses vis-a-vis Saudi Arabia, the kingdom has weaknesses as well as strengths vis-a-vis Yemen. No progress toward democratization has been made in the kingdom. With the Gulf conflict over, King Fahd has only slowly moved to create an appointed consultative council with just an advisory function, which he promised at the height of the conflict.[46] This lack of reform, especially after expectations for it had been raised, will not enhance the mon-

"As was mentioned earlier, the North Yemeni prime minister who signed an agreement with the Saudis to make the border established by the 1934 treaty permanent instead of subject lo renewal every 20 years was unable to get his own government to ratify the agreement. Both he and his foreign minister who accompanied him to Saudi Arabia on this occasion were later assassinated. Gause, p. 193, n71.

°Alan Cowell, "Two Yemens Let Animosity Fizzle into Coziness." *The New York Times,* October 20, 1989.

"Carapico, "Yemen: Unification and the Gulf War." See also Paris *Al-Yawm Al-Sabi,* July 16, 1990 in *FBIS-NES,* August 17, 1990, pp. 58-62.

"Virtually all the articles listed in note 39 quote Yemenis denouncing Salih's regime. In the same articles, they also call upon Yemenis to condemn Iraq and support Saudi Arabia. The very fact that they would make the latter statements is strong evidence that these individuals do not represent Yemeni public opinion since the Yemeni public was strongly pro-Iraqi and anti-Saudi during the Gulf conflict.

"Youssef M. Ibrahim, "Saudis Ready a Council Intended to Loosen a Closed Society," *The New York Times,* February 25, 1992.

archy's legitimacy among the growing educated segment of the population. Indeed, even conservative Muslim groups, long thought to be opponents of democratization in the kingdom, have recently demanded the creation of a consultative council and an end to corruption in government.[47]

This could become a serious problem for the stability of the Saudi regime if a democracy movement arises. While Saudi support for Yemeni opposition groups may have little effect on the stability of the Yemeni government, Yemeni support for Saudi opposition groups may have an important effect on the stability of the Saudi government. And if Riyadh continues to support Yemeni opposition groups, Sanaa is likely to retaliate by supporting Saudi opposition groups. The example, or even just the perception, of democratization in Yemen could induce Saudi democrats or other opposition groups to seek Sanaa's support.

Another Saudi weakness is that nationalism is not nearly as highly developed in the kingdom as it is in Yemen. Saudi Arabia was only created in this century through the military triumph of Nejd (central Arabia) over the Hijaz (western Arabia), the Eastern Province (where there is a large Shia population) and the Asir (the population of which is Yemeni).[48] The Saudi government has not succeeded in creating, or seriously tried to create, an integrated Saudi nationalism.

The Gulf conflict showed that the Saudi population would rally to Riyadh against the threat of foreign invasion. But it should hardly be surprising that the Saudi population would prefer to be ruled by the Saudi monarchy than by Saddam Hussein. Whether the Saudi population would support Riyadh in a prolonged border dispute with Yemen, though, is far from clear. This particular border issue is probably of little concern to the people of Hijaz and the Eastern Province; the people of Asir may actually support the Yemeni side. A prolonged Saudi-Yemeni border conflict, then, might serve to weaken the Saudi government domestically while strengthening the Yemeni one.

While Saudi Arabia is more powerful than Yemen, a Saudi perception that it can undermine the Yemeni regime or take over the oil-bearing territory along the undefined border might be a serious miscalculation. Yemen is probably strong enough not only to defend its interests, but to do so in a way that might exacerbate existing internal tensions in the kingdom. Yemen by itself is not strong enough to seriously attempt the invasion or subversion of the kingdom. Yemen's threat potential could be significantly enhanced, however, through substantial military support from other countries.

THE ROLE OF OTHER NATIONS

In any dispute between Saudi Arabia and Yemen, the United States will clearly support the kingdom. America and the West have an obvious interest in making sure that a friendly government remains in control of the kingdom's vast oil wealth. Yemen, by contrast, possesses little intrinsic value to America and the West. Yemen's primary importance is its geographical location next to Saudi Arabia and the Straits of Bab al-Mandab at the southern end of the Red Sea. Instead of regarding Yemen as a possible ally, America and the West will see it as a threat to their interests during periods of acute Saudi-Yemeni tension,

"Cairo *Al-Shaab,* May 21. 1991 in *FBIS-NES.* May 23. 1991, pp. 21-22; and Youssef M. Ibrahim, "Saudi Clergy and Scholars Petition for Change," *The New York Times,* May 26, 1991.

"On the expansion of Saudi power in the early twentieth century, see Philby; David Holden and Richard Johns, *The House of Saud* (New York: Holt. Rinehart and Winston, 1981), chs. 4-9; and Jacob Goldberg, *The Foreign Policy of Saudi Arabia: The Formative Years, 1902-1918* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1986).

such as the Gulf War. It is highly doubtful that American and Western leaders would ever see their interests being served by supporting Yemen against Saudi Arabia.

Indeed, even if Yemen could afford to buy Western weapons as a result of its oil income, Western governments are unlikely to authorize such sales. Even more than before, Saudi Arabia would oppose Western arms sales to Yemen. Western governments are likely to comply with Saudi desires, either because they genuinely fear a heightened Yemeni threat to the kingdom or because they fear being excluded from Saudi Arabia's far larger arms-acquisition program. As a result of their own unhappiness with Yemen's foreign policy during the Gulf conflict, it is doubtful that any Western nation will soon be willing to transfer arms to Yemen anyway.

But are there other countries which, now or in the foreseeable future, would be willing and able to provide substantial military assistance to Yemen? The only countries likely to do so are those which do not care whether arms transfers to Yemen aggravate their relations with Saudi Arabia and the West. Although the Soviet coup attempt of August 1991 failed miserably, a better planned coup might succeed. If conservative forces returned to power in Moscow, Russian-American hostility might be revived. Although- desiring good relations with Saudi Arabia, a conservative Russian leadership might place a higher priority on maintaining a system of naval facilities along the sea line of communication between western Russia and Vladivostok. Aden was an important base for the Soviet Navy in the past, which a conservative Russian leadership would probably want to keep. As long as Saudi-Yemeni tension persists and the United States continues to provide substantial military support to the kingdom, Sanaa would undoubtedly be willing to grant Moscow access to military facilities on its territory in exchange for Russian arms.[49]

Instead of threatening an invasion, Iraq might seek to weaken the Saudi monarchy by supporting its internal opponents directly and through Yemen.

At present, it does not seem likely that Moscow will be willing or able to pursue a hostile policy toward Saudi Arabia. Other nations, however, may be more willing and able to do so. One obvious candidate is a militarily revived Iraq, either with or without Saddam Hussein. Instead of threatening an invasion, Iraq might seek to weaken the Saudi monarchy by supporting its internal opponents directly and through Yemen. Part of Sanaa's motivation for adopting a pro-Iraqi position during the Gulf conflict was its desire to obtain a powerful ally at a time when the USSR had largely ceased providing military assistance to Yemen. If Iraq recovers militarily from its defeat by being able to finance arms purchases through oil exports, and if Saudi-Iraqi tension revives, Iraqi-Yemeni cooperation against the kingdom is also likely to revive.

Another anti-Western power which would be able to assist Yemen militarily is Iran. Despite the restoration of Saudi-Iranian diplomatic relations, it is doubtful that the long rivalry between these two powers has come to an end. Tehran may yet hope to support potential Islamist opposition

"During my May 1990 visit to Sanaa, a senior Yemeni official told me that united Yemen would be willing to allow the Soviet Union to have continued access to the military facilities it made use of in the South so long as Yemen received something valuable from Moscow in exchange, such as weapons.

throughout the kingdom or Shia opposition in the oil-rich Eastern Province. If Saudi-Iranian rivalry revives, Tehran is likely to offer support to Yemen. And because Iran is also an oil-rich country, it could provide substantial assistance to Sanaa. Yemeni-Iranian discussions on security issues may have already begun.[50]

If relations between Riyadh and Damascus grow contentious, Syria too might wish to aid Sanaa militarily. While Syria is not oil rich, it possesses large stockpiles of Soviet weaponry from which it could ship arms to Yemen. In addition, an anti-Western, anti-Saudi government could come to power in Cairo. This possibility cannot be ruled out, given Egypt's deep-rooted poverty as well as popular dissatisfaction with the Mubarak government's close ties with the West and links with Israel.[11] Yemen formed an integral part of Nasser's strategy to undermine Saudi Arabia in the 1960s. Like Syria, Egypt is not wealthy but possesses an enormous stockpile of weapons.

Finally, although Saudi Arabia is linked to the other monarchies of the Peninsula through the Gulf Cooperation Council, many of these smaller states have had active disputes with the kingdom over their common borders and other issues.[52] One scholar, Robert Burrowes, suggested that these states (several of which also possess enormous petroleum wealth) might ally with Yemen in a joint effort "to stand up to the sometimes overbearing Saudi Arabia and to hold it at bay."[53] While the smaller monarchies, especially Kuwait, are unlikely at present to provide much, if any, aid to Yemen as a result of its support for Iraq during the Gulf War, this might change if they feel threatened by Saudi policy, as they sometimes have in the past: during the North Yemeni civil war, when the Saudis backed the royalists, Kuwait supported the republicans.[54]

Whether any of these states will actually provide military assistance to Yemen remains to be seen. The existence of Saudi-Yemeni tension, however, provides an opportunity to weaken Saudi Arabia for any of the kingdom's potential enemies or rivals which possess surplus wealth, weapons or both. For certain neighboring states such as Iraq and Iran, alliance with Yemen could enable them to create a two-pronged threat on the kingdom's northeastern and southwestern frontiers.

CONCLUSION

As this study has shown, Saudi-Yemeni enmity is likely to be a permanent feature of the international relations of the Arabian Peninsula. It is hardly beneficial to American interests that the West's most important ally on the Arabian Peninsula is likely to be involved in a continuous state of tension or even conflict with the Peninsula's most populous state. This situation appears particularly grave considering that over time Yemen is likely to acquire additional wealth with which to arm itself. In addition, certain countries may have an incentive to assist Yemen in purchasing

"Sanaa Domestic Service in Arabic, November 1, 1990 in *FBIS-NES*, November 6, 1990, p. 19; and several reports in *FBIS-NES*, September 10,1991, pp. 10-11.

[31]How strong opposition to Mubarak is within Egypt is extremely difficult to judge. One visitor to Egypt at the beginning of the 1990-91 Gulf crisis reported ordinary Egyptians expressing a desire to kill Mubarak. He observed, "Never before in Egypt had I beard ordinary people so much as criticize their President in public, amongst strangers, far less talk of killing him, even if only metaphorically." Amitav Ghosh, "An Egyptian in Baghdad," *Granta*, No. 34 (Autumn 1990), p. 188.

"See J. B. Kelly. *Arabia, the Gulf and the West* (New York: Basic Books, 1980), esp. pp. 64-78. 84-87; and Katz. "The Saudis, Again. Are the Bullies on the Block."

"Burrowes. pp. 150-51.

"Ibid., p. 151.

arms or exploiting internal unrest within Saudi Arabia.

What can the United States do to best protect American and Western interests in this situation? There are essentially two policy choices. The first is to comply with the Saudi preference of attempting to isolate Yemen, as America has done in the past. The second is for America to attempt to constructively engage Yemen so that it will not cooperate with others in threatening or weakening the kingdom. What are the potential risks and rewards for American interests of these two policies?

Cooperating with Saudi Arabia in isolating Yemen seems attractive for two reasons. First, since Saudi-Yemeni tension is likely to continue indefinitely, and since Saudi Arabia is far more important to the West than Yemen, America and the West have no interest in helping Yemen become stronger. The more powerful Yemen becomes, the more potential harm it can do to Saudi Arabia as well as to American and Western interests there. Second, since this is the policy which the Saudi government prefers, pursuing it enhances the prospects for Saudi-American cooperation and avoids causing friction in the relationship.

There are, however, several drawbacks associated with attempting to isolate Yemen. Merely because America and the West may defer to Saudi wishes and not transfer arms to Yemen does not mean that states hostile to the United States and/or the kingdom will do so. Isolated from Saudi Arabia's allies, Yemen would have an incentive to obtain military assistance from Riyadh's enemies. In addition, if Saudi Arabia and its allies treat Yemen as an enemy, then Yemen may well respond in kind and treat Saudi Arabia as an enemy. Through cooperating with powers opposed to Saudi Arabia, Yemen may be able to pose a significant threat to the kingdom.

If Yemen and other states are able to exploit internal unrest inside Saudi Arabia, the threat to the Saudi monarchy could be considerable. Nor should the threat of unrest inside the kingdom be discounted, especially since there is evidence of growing demands within Saudi Arabia for increased public participation in government and greater governmental accountability.[33] It would be naive to think that at a time when democratization has swept away seemingly impregnable dictatorships in so many parts of the world, Saudi Arabia would somehow be immune to this process.

Finally, by cooperating with Saudi efforts to isolate Yemen, the United States would give Sanaa little incentive to refrain from cooperating with others in harming American interests in Saudi Arabia. Yemen is not likely to be dissuaded by the United States from actions threatening the kingdom when Yemen sees itself being threatened by Riyadh and as having little to lose from its already poor relations with the United States. Despite its attractions, the policy of cooperating with Saudi Arabia in isolating Yemen is potentially counterproductive.

An effort to pursue constructive engagement with Yemen might offer greater hope of success. Such a policy would involve U.S. (and other Western) economic assistance and even a certain amount of military assistance to Yemen. It would also involve American and Western diplomatic support for Yemen's claim to the oil-bearing terri-

"See, for example. Judith Caesar, "Dissent in Saudi Arabia," *The Christian Science Monitor,* August 24, 1990; Tony Horwitz, "With Gulf War Over. Saudi Fundamentalists Reassert Themselves," *The Wall Street Journal,* May 2,1991; and Ibrahim. "Saudi Clergy and Scholars Petition for Change."

tory to which the Saudis are also pressing a claim.

Under [constructive engagement], Yemen would have a strong incentive not to behave toward Saudi Arabia in ways that harmed American interests—a much greater incentive than if. . . America and the West cooperated. . . in isolating Yemen.

The purpose of this policy would be to provide an incentive for Yemen not to do anything to harm their relations with America and the West even if Saudi-Yemeni relations deteriorate. America and the West could make clear to Yemen that they would support its economic development and legitimate security concerns but that their aid would cease if Yemen acted to threaten Saudi Arabia. Under these circumstances, Yemen would have a strong incentive not to behave toward Saudi Arabia in ways that harmed American interests—a much greater incentive than if, as the Saudis prefer, America and the West cooperated with them in isolating Yemen.

If successful, constructive engagement would restrain Yemen from both hostile actions of its own against Saudi Arabia and cooperation with the kingdom's other external or internal opponents. By de-linking Yemen from these opponents, the United States could render them less threatening.

There are, of course, risks associated with the policy of constructive engagement. It might not work: Yemen could use whatever aid it received from the West, as well as from Saudi Arabia's enemies, to strengthen itself vis-a-vis Saudi Arabia and pose a greater threat to it than ever. If Yemen behaved this way, then all Western aid to it should stop.

As a nation, however, Yemen is probably more interested in its own prosperity than in pursuing hostility toward Saudi Arabia. The problem with the alternative to constructive engagement—isolation—is that it seeks to contain a potential Yemeni threat to the kingdom through denying prosperity to Yemen, which in turn serves to motivate Yemen to pursue a threatening policy toward the kingdom. If America and the West could offer Yemen the choice between 1) achieving prosperity with Western help, or 2) threatening Saudi Arabia and thus forgoing prosperity, Yemen is more likely to opt for the former. If, however, Yemen opts for the latter, America and the West can always cease aiding Sanaa and revert to isolating it.

The other risk associated with constructive engagement is the negative effect it might have on Saudi-American relations. Saudi Arabia might react angrily to a policy which would vitiate the kingdom's decades-old effort to enhance its security through keeping Yemen weak. The kingdom could be expected to retaliate by, for example, purchasing major weapons systems from nations other than the United States or even suspending certain aspects of Saudi-American security cooperation.

The United States would undoubtedly prefer to avoid a deterioration in Saudi-American relations. It is important to understand, however, that Saudi Arabia cannot afford a serious breach in its relations with the United States. No other country or group of countries could replace America as the kingdom's primary protector. The former Soviet Union is clearly not suitable; Riyadh could not turn to Baghdad or Tehran for protection either, for obvious reasons. Nor do the Saudis see Syria or Egypt as trustworthy or capable protectors.

Riyadh could shift its weapons purchases from the United States to Europe (including, perhaps, Russia). The Saudis understand, though, that Western Europe is unlikely to send troops to defend the kingdom without American participation. For Riyadh to suspend aspects of Saudi-American security cooperation, then, would only serve the counterproductive end of encouraging the kingdom's internal and external opponents. For Saudi Arabia to shift its arms purchases to Europe would certainly be undesirable from the American point of view. Of course, if America's European allies participated in the policy of constructive engagement toward Yemen, this might not occur. Even if this did happen, however, it is important to remember that America's most important interest is not maximizing arms sales to Saudi Arabia but ensuring the continuation of Western access to that country's oil.

The security of Saudi Arabia is of such vital importance to America and the West that Washington cannot afford to cooperate with Riyadh in actions that ultimately undermine the kingdom's security. Constructively engaging Yemen so that it will not cooperate with others in threatening or weakening the kingdom is a more promising method of ensuring Saudi security than isolating Yemen.